

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer-implemented system for distributing consumer demand upstream in a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a downstream supply entity and one or more upstream supply chain entities, each upstream supply chain entity being associated with a supply channel delay between the upstream supply chain entity and the downstream supply chain entity that represents a time that must elapse before a product in inventory of the upstream supply chain entity can be made available to a consumer associated with the downstream supply chain entity, the system being associated with the downstream supply chain entity and comprising:

an interface operable to:

receive, at a current time, an indication of consumer demand for a product that a consumer may be willing to receive at a future date rather than the current date in exchange for an incentive; and

communicate the indication of consumer demand for the product the consumer may be willing to receive at a future date rather than the current date in exchange for an incentive;

a quote system coupled to the interface, the quote system operable to:

receive, from the interface, the current indication of consumer demand for the product the consumer may be willing to receive at a future date rather than the current date in exchange for an incentive;

determine a particular incentive based on an order lead time for the product, the order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a particular future date and the current date, the order lead time being longer than a supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and an upstream supply chain entity, the particular incentive reflecting cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the order lead time; and

communicate the particular incentive to the interface;

the interface operable to:

receive the particular incentive from the quote system; and

convey the particular incentive to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive; and

5 a consumer order management system (COMS) operable to, if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive, communicate an order for the product to the upstream supply chain entity to allow the consumer to receive the product at the particular future date from current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange  
10 for the particular incentive, the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the order lead time and reflected in the particular incentive comprising cost savings associated with the consumer receiving the product at the particular future date from current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity.

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2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the particular incentive comprises a price discount on the product.

3. The system of Claim 1, wherein the quote system is a first quote system and operable to:

collaborate with a second quote system associated with the upstream supply chain entity to determine a cost at the upstream supply chain entity associated with the consumer receiving the product from the current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity;

determine a profit increase on the product at the downstream supply chain entity based on:

the cost at the upstream supply chain entity associated with supplying the product from the current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity; and

the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the order lead time; and

determine the particular incentive based on the profit increase.

4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the quote system is a first quote system and operable to collaborate with a second quote system associated with the upstream supply chain entity to determine the particular incentive based on one or more business rules associated with one or more of the downstream and upstream supply chain entities.

5. The system of Claim 1, wherein:

the particular future date is a first particular future date, the particular incentive is a first particular incentive, the upstream supply chain entity is a first upstream supply chain entity, and the order lead time is a first order lead time;

the quote system is further operable to:

determine a second particular incentive based on a second order lead time for the product, the second order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a second particular future date and the current date, the second order lead time being longer than a second supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and a second upstream supply chain entity, the

second particular incentive reflecting collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the first upstream supply chain entity associated with the second order lead time; and

communicate the second particular incentive to the interface;

5 the interface is further operable to:

receive the second particular incentive from the quote system; and

convey the second particular incentive to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the second particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the second particular incentive; and

10 the COMS is further operable to, if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the second particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the second particular incentive, communicate an order for the product to the second upstream supply chain entity to allow the consumer to receive the product at the second particular future date from current inventory of the second upstream  
15 supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange for the second particular incentive, the collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the first upstream supply chain entity associated with the second order lead time and reflected in the second particular incentive comprising collective cost savings associated with the consumer receiving  
20 the product at the second particular future date from current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity or the first upstream supply chain entity, the second particular incentive being larger than the first particular incentive.

25 6. The system of Claim 5, wherein the interface is operable to convey the first and second particular incentives to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the first particular future date or the second particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the first particular incentive or the second particular incentive.

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7. The system of Claim 5, wherein the quote system is a first quote system and operable to:

collaborate with a second quote system associated with the second upstream supply chain entity to determine a cost at the second upstream supply chain entity associated with the consumer receiving the product from the current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity;

determine a profit increase on the product at the downstream supply chain entity based on:

the cost at the second upstream supply chain entity associated with supplying the product from the current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity; and

the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the second order lead time; and

determine the second particular incentive based on the profit increase.

8. The system of Claim 5, wherein the quote system is a first quote system and operable to collaborate with one or both of a second quote system associated with the first upstream supply chain entity and with a third quote system associated with the second upstream supply chain entity to determine the second particular incentive based on one or more business rules associated with one or more of the downstream and first and second upstream supply chain entities.

9. The system of Claim 5, wherein:

the quote system is further operable to:

determine a third particular incentive based on a third order lead time for the product, the third order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a third particular future date and the current date, the third order lead time being longer than a third supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and a third upstream supply chain entity, the third particular incentive reflecting collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the second upstream supply chain entity associated with the third order lead time; and

communicate the third particular incentive to the interface;

the interface is further operable to:

receive the third particular incentive from the quote system; and

convey the third particular incentive to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the third particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the third particular incentive; and

the COMS is further operable to, if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the third particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the third particular incentive, communicate an order for the product to the third upstream supply chain entity to allow the consumer to receive the product at the third particular future date from current inventory of the third upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange for the third particular incentive, the collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the second upstream supply chain entity associated with the third

order lead time and reflected in the third particular incentive comprising collective cost savings associated with the consumer receiving the product at the third particular future date from current inventory of the third upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity, the first upstream supply chain entity, or the second upstream supply chain entity, the third particular incentive being larger than the first particular incentive and the second particular incentive.

10. The system of Claim 1, wherein the consumer choosing to receive the product at the future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive comprises one of:

the consumer purchasing the product at the current date;

the consumer committing at the current date to purchase the product at the particular future date; and

the consumer indicating an intention at the current date to purchase the product at the particular future date.

11. The system of Claim 1, wherein the consumer receiving the product at the particular future date comprises one of:

the consumer visiting the downstream supply chain entity at the particular future date to pick up the product;

the downstream supply chain entity delivering the product to the consumer at the particular future date; and

the upstream supply chain entity delivering the product to the consumer at the particular future date.

- 5        12.     The system of Claim 1, wherein, if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive, the consumer makes an initial payment to the retailer at the current date based on one or more costs to the downstream supply chain entity associated with cancellation of the order.



13. A computer-implemented method for distributing consumer demand upstream in a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a downstream supply entity and one or more upstream supply chain entities, each upstream supply chain entity being associated with a supply channel delay between the upstream supply chain entity and the downstream supply chain entity that represents a time that must elapse before a product in inventory of the upstream supply chain entity can be made available to a consumer associated with the downstream supply chain entity, the method being associated with the downstream supply chain entity and comprising:

receiving, at a current time, an indication of consumer demand for a product that a consumer may be willing to receive at a future date rather than the current date in exchange for an incentive;

determining a particular incentive based on an order lead time for the product, the order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a particular future date and the current date, the order lead time being longer than a supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and an upstream supply chain entity, the particular incentive reflecting cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the order lead time;

conveying the particular incentive to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive; and

if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive, communicating an order for the product to the upstream supply chain entity to allow the consumer to receive the product at the particular future date from current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange for the particular incentive, the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the order lead time and reflected in the particular incentive comprising cost savings associated with the consumer receiving the product at the particular future date from current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the particular incentive comprises a price discount on the product.

5           15. The method of Claim 13, comprising:  
collaborating with the upstream supply chain entity to determine a cost at the  
upstream supply chain entity associated with the consumer receiving the product from  
the current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity;  
determining a profit increase on the product at the downstream supply chain  
10 entity based on:  
the cost at the upstream supply chain entity associated with supplying  
the product from the current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity; and  
the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with  
the order lead time; and  
15 determining the particular incentive based on the profit increase.

16. The method of Claim 13, comprising collaborating with the upstream  
supply chain entity to determine the particular incentive based on one or more  
business rules associated with one or more of the downstream and upstream supply  
20 chain entities.

17. The method of Claim 13, wherein:

the particular future date is a first particular future date, the particular incentive is a first particular incentive, the upstream supply chain entity is a first upstream supply chain entity, and the order lead time is a first order lead time;

5 the method further comprising:

determining a second particular incentive based on a second order lead time for the product, the second order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a second particular future date and the current date, the second order lead time being longer than a second supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and a second upstream supply chain entity, the  
10 second particular incentive reflecting collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the first upstream supply chain entity associated with the second order lead time;

conveying the second particular incentive to allow the consumer to  
15 choose whether to receive the product at the second particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the second particular incentive; and

if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the second particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the second particular incentive, communicating an order for the product to the second upstream supply chain entity to  
20 allow the consumer to receive the product at the second particular future date from current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange for the second particular incentive, the collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the first upstream supply chain entity associated with the second order lead time and  
25 reflected in the second particular incentive comprising collective cost savings associated with the consumer receiving the product at the second particular future date from current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity or the first upstream supply chain entity, the second particular incentive being larger than the first particular  
30 incentive.

18. The method of Claim 17, comprising conveying the first and second particular incentives to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the first particular future date or the second particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the first particular incentive or the second particular incentive.

19. The method of Claim 17, comprising:  
collaborating with the second upstream supply chain entity to determine a cost at the second upstream supply chain entity associated with the consumer receiving the product from the current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity;  
determining a profit increase on the product at the downstream supply chain entity based on:  
the cost at the second upstream supply chain entity associated with supplying the product from the current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity; and  
the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the second order lead time; and  
determining the second particular incentive based on the profit increase.

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20. The method of Claim 17, comprising collaborating with one or both of the first and second upstream supply chain entities to determine the second particular incentive based on one or more business rules associated with one or more of the downstream and first and second upstream supply chain entities.

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21. The method of Claim 17, comprising:

determining a third particular incentive based on a third order lead time for the product, the third order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a third particular future date and the current date, the third order lead time being longer than a third supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and a third upstream supply chain entity, the third particular incentive reflecting collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the second upstream supply chain entity associated with the third order lead time;

conveying the third particular incentive to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the third particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the third particular incentive; and

if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the third particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the third particular incentive, communicating an order for the product to the third upstream supply chain entity to allow the consumer to receive the product at the third particular future date from current inventory of the third upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange for the third particular incentive, the collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the second upstream supply chain entity associated with the third order lead time and reflected in the third particular incentive comprising collective cost savings associated with the consumer receiving the product at the third particular future date from current inventory of the third upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity, the first upstream supply chain entity, or the second upstream supply chain entity, the third particular incentive being larger than the first particular incentive and the second particular incentive.

22. The method of Claim 13, wherein the consumer choosing to receive the product at the future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive comprises one of:

the consumer purchasing the product at the current date;

5 the consumer committing at the current date to purchase the product at the particular future date; and

the consumer indicating an intention at the current date to purchase the product at the particular future date.

10 23. The method of Claim 13, wherein the consumer receiving the product at the particular future date comprises one of:

the consumer visiting the downstream supply chain entity at the particular future date to pick up the product;

15 the downstream supply chain entity delivering the product to the consumer at the particular future date; and

the upstream supply chain entity delivering the product to the consumer at the particular future date.

20 24. The method of Claim 13, wherein, if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive, the consumer makes an initial payment to the retailer at the current date based on one or more costs to the downstream supply chain entity associated with cancellation of the order.

25. Software for distributing consumer demand upstream in a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a downstream supply entity and one or more upstream supply chain entities, each upstream supply chain entity being associated with a supply channel delay between the upstream supply chain entity and the downstream supply chain entity that represents a time that must elapse before a product in inventory of the upstream supply chain entity can be made available to a consumer associated with the downstream supply chain entity, the software being associated with the downstream supply chain entity, embodied in computer-readable media, and when executed operable to:

receive, at a current time, an indication of consumer demand for a product that a consumer may be willing to receive at a future date rather than the current date in exchange for an incentive;

determine a particular incentive based on an order lead time for the product, the order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a particular future date and the current date, the order lead time being longer than a supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and an upstream supply chain entity, the particular incentive reflecting cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the order lead time;

convey the particular incentive to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive; and

if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive, communicate an order for the product to the upstream supply chain entity to allow the consumer to receive the product at the particular future date from current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange for the particular incentive, the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the order lead time and reflected in the particular incentive comprising cost savings associated with the consumer receiving the product

at the particular future date from current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity.

5           26.     The method of Claim 25, wherein the particular incentive comprises a price discount on the product.

          27.     The software of Claim 25, operable to:  
          collaborate with the upstream supply chain entity to determine a cost at the  
upstream supply chain entity associated with the consumer receiving the product from  
10     the current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity;  
          determine a profit increase on the product at the downstream supply chain  
entity based on:  
          the cost at the upstream supply chain entity associated with supplying  
the product from the current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity; and  
15           the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with  
the order lead time; and  
          determine the particular incentive based on the profit increase.

20           28.     The software of Claim 25, operable to collaborate with the upstream  
supply chain entity to determine the particular incentive based on one or more  
business rules associated with one or more of the downstream and upstream supply  
chain entities.



29. The software of Claim 25, wherein:

the particular future date is a first particular future date, the particular incentive is a first particular incentive, the upstream supply chain entity is a first upstream supply chain entity, and the order lead time is a first order lead time;

5 the software being further operable to:

determine a second particular incentive based on a second order lead time for the product, the second order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a second particular future date and the current date, the second order lead time being longer than a second supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and a second upstream supply chain entity, the second particular incentive reflecting collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the first upstream supply chain entity associated with the second order lead time;

15 convey the second particular incentive to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the second particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the second particular incentive; and

if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the second particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the second particular incentive, communicate an order for the product to the second upstream supply chain entity to allow the consumer to receive the product at the second particular future date from current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange for the second particular incentive, the collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the first upstream supply chain entity associated with the second order lead time and reflected in the second particular incentive comprising collective cost savings associated with the consumer receiving the product at the second particular future date from current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity or the first upstream supply chain entity, the second particular incentive being larger than the first particular incentive.

30. The software of Claim 29, operable to convey the first and second particular incentives to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the first particular future date or the second particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the first particular incentive or the second particular incentive.

31. The software of Claim 29, operable to:  
collaborate with the second upstream supply chain entity to determine a cost at the second upstream supply chain entity associated with the consumer receiving the product from the current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity;  
determine a profit increase on the product at the downstream supply chain entity based on:  
the cost at the second upstream supply chain entity associated with supplying the product from the current inventory of the second upstream supply chain entity; and  
the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the second order lead time; and  
determine the second particular incentive based on the profit increase.

32. The software of Claim 29, operable to collaborate with one or both of the first and second upstream supply chain entities to determine the second particular incentive based on one or more business rules associated with one or more of the downstream and first and second upstream supply chain entities.

33. The software of Claim 29, operable to:

determine a third particular incentive based on a third order lead time for the product, the third order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a third particular future date and the current date, the third order lead time being longer than a third supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and a third upstream supply chain entity, the third particular incentive reflecting collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the second upstream supply chain entity associated with the third order lead time;

convey the third particular incentive to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the third particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the third particular incentive; and

if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the third particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the third particular incentive, communicate an order for the product to the third upstream supply chain entity to allow the consumer to receive the product at the third particular future date from current inventory of the third upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange for the third particular incentive, the collective cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity and the second upstream supply chain entity associated with the third order lead time and reflected in the third particular incentive comprising collective cost savings associated with the consumer receiving the product at the third particular future date from current inventory of the third upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity, the first upstream supply chain entity, or the second upstream supply chain entity, the third particular incentive being larger than the first particular incentive and the second particular incentive.

34. The software of Claim 25, wherein the consumer choosing to receive the product at the future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive comprises one of:

the consumer purchasing the product at the current date;

5 the consumer committing at the current date to purchase the product at the particular future date; and

the consumer indicating an intention at the current date to purchase the product at the particular future date.

10 35. The software of Claim 25, wherein the consumer receiving the product at the particular future date comprises one of:

the consumer visiting the downstream supply chain entity at the particular future date to pick up the product;

15 the downstream supply chain entity delivering the product to the consumer at the particular future date; and

the upstream supply chain entity delivering the product to the consumer at the particular future date.

20 36. The software of Claim 25, wherein, if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive, the consumer makes an initial payment to the retailer at the current date based on one or more costs to the downstream supply chain entity associated with cancellation of the order.

37. A computer-implemented system for distributing consumer demand upstream in a supply chain, the supply chain comprising a downstream supply entity and one or more upstream supply chain entities, each upstream supply chain entity being associated with a supply channel delay between the upstream supply chain entity and the downstream supply chain entity that represents a time that must elapse before a product in inventory of the upstream supply chain entity can be made available to a consumer associated with the downstream supply chain entity, the system being associated with the downstream supply chain entity and operable:

receive, at a current time, an indication of consumer demand for a product that a consumer may be willing to receive at a future date rather than the current date in exchange for an incentive;

determine a particular incentive based on an order lead time for the product, the order lead time for the product representing a time difference between a particular future date and the current date, the order lead time being longer than a supply channel delay between the downstream supply chain entity and an upstream supply chain entity, the particular incentive reflecting cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the order lead time;

convey the particular incentive to allow the consumer to choose whether to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive; and

if the consumer chooses to receive the product at the particular future date rather than the current date in exchange for the particular incentive, communicate an order for the product to the upstream supply chain entity to allow the consumer to receive the product at the particular future date from current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity in exchange for the particular incentive, the cost savings to the downstream supply chain entity associated with the order lead time and reflected in the particular incentive comprising cost savings associated with the consumer receiving the product at the particular future date from current inventory of the upstream supply chain entity rather than from current inventory of the downstream supply chain entity.